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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 000974

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: HR ACTIVIST PREDICTS FUTURE PROTESTS WILL BE  
PEACEFUL; "TRANSFER" ISSUE BIGGEST POTENTIAL FLASHPOINT

REF: A. AMMAN 745

[1](#)B. AMMAN 6521 (2002)

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRS GREGORY L. BERRY. REASONS: 1.5 (b) and  
(d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. On February 9, PolOff met with long-time human rights contact Fawzi Samhoury, who has close contact with the IAF and professional associations. Samhoury expects upcoming demonstrations planned by opposition leaders protesting possible military action against Iraq to remain peaceful. He commented that the Jan 31 "anti-war" demonstration in Shmeisani (reftel A) was less "Pro-Saddam" than it appeared. Among Jordanians likely to participate in forthcoming demonstrations, Samhoury claims demonstrators are most upset with the lack of parliamentary elections and the slower-than-expected pace of democratic reforms. Samhoury also noted a growing frustration towards Arab leaders for failing to deal with the issue of Saddam. He believes transfer of Palestinians from the West Bank (expected by some in the wake of military action in Iraq) is the one "flash-point" that could possibly ignite the street. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Samhoury said Islamic Action Front/Muslim Brotherhood leaders told him they will try to "motivate" Jordanians to demonstrate as a possible war approaches. According to Samhoury, in the last demonstration organizers did not provide transportation for people living outside of Amman for fear their busses would be stopped by security services. The result was attendance of less than 3,000. In forthcoming demonstrations, such as one planned for February 15, Samhoury said he expects the organizers to step up efforts to increase crowd sizes. The organizers also will likely attempt to plan demonstrations outside of Amman in the near future as well. Samhoury said protest organizers are cooperating well with the GOJ and are "committed" to keeping the demonstrations peaceful. He believes this cooperation is sustainable for at least the near-term.

[1](#)3. (SBU) NOTE: On February 9, the IAF called on Jordanians to participate in a one hour "black-out" on February 14 at 20:00 in an effort to "stop the war." The IAF's statement was typically vitriolic, describing US and British troops massing in the region as "wolves," but called on Jordanians to take non-violent actions, such as turning off the lights and televisions in their homes, lighting candles and praying for God to "keep the predators away." END NOTE.

[1](#)4. (C) Although the January 31 demonstration was billed as "anti-war," Samhoury said the participants were privately (if not vocally) most upset about the lack of a parliament and democratic reform. In general, demonstrators expressed their strong support for the opposition. Samhoury said many people were also upset with regional Arab leaders for failing to avert the current Iraq crisis (note: this view was also reported to us by public affairs contacts).

[1](#)5. (C) Samhoury is optimistic rallies will remain peaceful. He believes Jordanians, although frustrated, will not take to the streets in the event of an attack on Iraq. "Only if the Israelis try to transfer Palestinians from the West Bank into Jordan or kill large numbers of Palestinians could things go out of control. Transfer is the worst thing in the minds of people here, it will be worse for them than seeing Iraqi civilians killed on TV." Samhoury commented that the USG would do well to make a push, "whatever you are able," to spur Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts forward.

[1](#)6. (C) NOTE AND COMMENT. Samhoury is still proceeding with his court case to have the Jordan Society for Citizens' Rights reinstated (reftel B). Notwithstanding the dissolution of the JSCR, Samhoury is still in contact with human rights activists and demonstration organizers. His view tracks with what many here are telling us: While some Jordanians may occasionally hoist a pro-Saddam placard in order to express frustration with the US, they are most concerned about the possibility of Israeli actions in the West Bank following military action in Iraq.  
BERRY